

BASIC INFORMATION

Description

Urethral prolapse is a condition in which the tip of the urethra becomes everted through the opening of the penis.

Causes

The exact cause is unknown, but prolonged sexual excitement, the presence of urethral stones (calculi) or infection, and increased abdominal pressure (from coughing, straining to urinate, or straining to defecate) have all been implicated. English bulldogs are predisposed to this condition.

Clinical Signs

A prolapsed urethra looks like a small, red or purple mass at the tip of the penis. The mass may have a donut-shaped appearance. The tissue easily becomes inflamed. Blood may be seen in the urine, or a bloody discharge may be present. Affected dogs may strain to urinate or excessively lick the prepuce (the sheath around the penis).

Diagnostic Tests

Urethral prolapse is generally diagnosed by direct physical examination. A urinalysis, urine culture (to look for infection), and either abdominal x-rays or an ultrasound (to look for stones) are often recommended. Because English bulldogs are predisposed to urate and cystine stones in the bladder and these types of stones do not show up on x-rays, an ultrasound is generally preferred. If it is unclear whether the donut-shaped tissue is cancer or a urethral

prolapse, cytology (evaluation of cells under a microscope) may be helpful. Other tests may be recommended to investigate the cause of any underlying coughing or straining.

TREATMENT AND FOLLOW-UP

Treatment Options

In some cases, the prolapsed tissue can gently be replaced using a urinary catheter. Then a temporary suture is placed at the opening of the penis to prevent the tissue from prolapsing again. Unfortunately, recurrence is common with this technique. The preferred treatment is to surgically remove the prolapsed tissue. Castration is often recommended to prevent recurrence from sexual excitement.

Follow-up Care

Bleeding is common and may persist for up to 2 weeks following surgery. The patient must be prevented from traumatizing the surgery site. Sedation and an Elizabethan collar help prevent licking of the site. During recovery, the dog must be kept from becoming excited. It should be isolated from other pets and kept away from all female dogs until recovery is complete.

Prognosis

Recurrence of the prolapse is likely if the exposed tissue is not surgically removed and castration is not performed. Prognosis is excellent with surgery. The condition is not life-threatening.